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WORLD IS STIRRED BY KOREAN "CONSPIRACY CASE"

Vigorous Charges Made That American And Christian Converts Have Been Grossly Maltreated By Japanese

As week after week in the trial of the alleged Korean conspirators goes by, international interest becomes deeper.

From Seoul, where the trial is in progress, come the most sensational reports, widely differing as to the facts they present. The New York Herald, which has been for many years an authority on Korean affairs, is declaring to the world that Japan is wrong in her claims of a conspiracy, and the Herald's reports have stirred statesmen all over the world.

A good statement of the whole affair is given by the Herald's correspondent, who writes from Seoul as follows:

speed the departures of friends adding materially to the railway revenues.

Nothing of a sensational character, no untoward happening of any kind, nothing in the shape even of unfriendliness, occurred at any of the stations at which the Governor General stopped, or anywhere else.

At the stations he returned the greetings of officials, walked the length of the platform, returning the bows of the greeters, shook hands with foreigners when any were present, and usually addressed a few remarks to the students.

In October of the next year, ten months later, about forty of the teachers and students of Hugh O'Neill Jr. Academy, at Syon Chun, were arrested and taken to Seoul. It was stated by the authorities that these men and boys were being detained merely as witnesses. A few weeks later the Governor General visited Syon Chun on his second trip north. This time, as before, he greeted the students and took occasion to compliment the principal of the academy, the Rev. G. S. McCune, upon the fine showing made by the students and the excellent work of the institution.

Basis of the Case.

Those first arrests, it soon developed, were the precursors of a large number of others. Just how many men have been in toils is not clear. A few were released after being examined by the police; nine against whom there was apparently no testimony were banished under a year's sentence; 123 were finally placed on trial.

The charge against these men is that they were involved in a conspiracy to assassinate the Governor General. The case is based upon their supposed membership in or connection with a society known as the Sin Min Hoi, or New People's Society.

Before annexation, at a time when Japan was giving Koreans assurance that their country was independent and that there was no possible intention to incorporate it in the Empire of Japan, there existed here an organization known as the Young Men's Friendship Society. Later, also, before annexation, the name was changed to the New People's Society.

The object of the society, as explained by the promoters and as testified in open court, was mutual help. The idea back of its organization seems to have been to create an association along the lines of the Y. M. C. A., which does such excellent work in Korea, but whose membership is confined to Christians. The promoters of the New People's Society contemplated an association of somewhat the same general character in which any young Korean, Christian or non-Christian, might be a member.

They also admit that one of the aims of the society was to instill patriotism in the hearts of the Korean youth.

At the time of its organization Prince Ito was Resident General. It was part of his policy to hold out to Koreans the prospect of real independence as soon as their country's government had been properly reshaped under the beneficent direction of their "best friend," Japan. The suggestion that Japan had any intention of annexing their country was declared to be merely the invention of the wicked New York Herald.

With these assurances, the promoters of the New People's Society felt it certainly no crime to incorporate love of country among the cardinal purposes of the society.

So far as known, the society never amounted to much. Its membership was never large, nor is there any proof of its existence after annexation. If it had amounted to anything the fact would have been of common knowledge; these things are never kept secret for long in Oriental countries.

The theory of the prosecution, as disclosed in the trial, is that this New People's Society did continue to exist and that it was in reality an Assassination League. As Presiding Judge Tsukuhara put it to a witness, Pyen In-Syo, who had denied membership in the society and who said he knew nothing about its objects:

"Yes you do. You know its object very well. It is to assassinate high officials. The headquarters of the society are at San Francisco, where it publishes two newspapers. There is another organ of the party published in Hawaii, while the society has a branch at Vladivostok. In Korea the affairs of the society have been managed by Baron Yun, Yang Ki-Tak, An Ta-Kuk and Kil Chin-Hyong. You were the man in charge of the branch at Ping Yang. You know all this."

Deny Membership.

This witness and many others said they had never been members of any such society and knew nothing about it.

Baron Yun testified that he was the founder of the Young Men's Friendship Society, whose purpose

was to arouse Korean youths to love their country, "and with this purpose we published a magazine in which we put the pictures of famous people and wrote articles upon education." The name of the society had subsequently been changed, but not the purpose.

"Was there not the purpose of restoring your country?" the Judge asked.

"At that time the Kingdom of Korea existed," was the reply, "and it was my duty to inspire the minds of Korean youth with the idea of loving their country. In carrying out the purposes of the society I did only this."

Baron Yun denied that the society had any such purpose of assassination or that he had ever heard of assassination discussed. His testimony shows that with the annexation he accepted the inevitable and used his influence to induce all others with whom he came in contact to do the same.

"You must have been indignant at the annexation being carried out," interjected the court. "Did you not form a plan to restore Korean national rights?"

"I should never have found myself in this court had I had power at that time to formulate a plan to successfully resist the authority assumed by Japan over my native country," was Baron Yun's prompt reply. "But," he added, "I know it was useless."

The establishment of a military school in what Koreans call West Dan Do, which is across the border in China, forms the other court in the indictment against the New People's Society.

Such a plan did exist. The man who originated it is now wearing the garb of a convict for the crime of having thought of the idea. He is Yang Ki-Tak, once editor of the Korean edition of the Daily News, which, during the period of the "protectorate," was more than once a thorn in the flesh to Japanese officials.

When questioned by the Court about this project, Mr. Yang said:

"Why, yes. The establishing of a military school was a new plan which I conceived on the next day after annexation. The convict garb which I now wear is in answer to this."

The case of the prosecution as it is made out in the questions to which the prisoners gave assent—they declare under torture—in the police examination assumes the leaders of the "conspiracy" to be Baron Yun, Yang Ki-Tak and four others—Im, An, Ok and Yi. These men are charged with having held frequent meetings at Im's house in Seoul at which plans for assassination were made. All the men concerned deny that there ever were such meetings.

Baron Yun, Mr. Yang and several others were trustees of a patriotic

fund raised, before annexation, by popular subscription. They held several meetings, always at the Y. M. C. A., to determine upon the final disposition of this fund whose raison d'être ceased to exist with annexation. It was one of those funds raised by small contributions. Some had been returned to the subscribers, but as there was no way of reaching the others, the trustees proposed to devote it to some charitable work. At one time it was decided to give a portion to the Y. M. C. A. as a permanent fund, the interest on which could be used but with provision for return of such portions of the principal as might be called for by subscribers. Subsequently the Japanese took the fund for an orphanage—a good work.

The Points at Issue.

It is said that these alleged secret meetings were held at Im's house in Seoul, three dates being given.

The record of the police examination shows that a servant of Im's testified that such meetings had been held and gave as the dates September 10, November 16 and December 3, 1910.

This witness was not brought into the court, though Im requested that he be brought. Im said that this servant was an ignorant man, sixty years old, who could remember nothing so far as two years back, and that if he was brought into court he would not be able to identify one of the men other than himself.

The only other "witness" on this point before the police was Kang, a man who was in Baron Yun's employ after the latter's arrest. Kang has not been produced in court. All efforts to ascertain his whereabouts have proved futile. All that is known about Kang is that he went to the prison frequently in connection with having Baron Yun's meals sent to him. One day the prison doors opened for Kang and then closed on him, and he has not been seen or heard from since. There are rumors that this man's hip was twisted out of joint by the gentle questioning of the police examiners, but in his absence there is no possibility of establishing the truth or the falsity of this rumor.

The police examiner reports to the court that Kang confirmed the evidence of Im's ignorant old servant. He is not produced in the court by the prosecution, and the defense could not, of course, produce him. Baron Yun has fully established by documentary proof that he was in his home city, Songdo, on each of the three dates named.

Yang Ki-Tak was asked about one of these presumed meetings, the month but not the day being given. He asked what day it was supposed to have been.

"In September," responded the

"But was there no day?" asked Yang.

"No date," was the Court's reply. "Since there was no such meeting there, probably was no date!" replied Mr. Yang with a laugh.

Most of the men arrested belong to the north, at Ping Yang, Syon Chun and near these two places.

The theory of the prosecution makes the six men named the leaders of the plot. It is necessary to find some connecting link between these men at Seoul and the preachers, teachers, students and others up north. The prosecution seeks to show that An and Yi served in this capacity. Not only is this denied by all the defendants, but both of these men furnish testimony that seems to prove alibis.

As evidence that there was a plot against General Terauchi's life the prosecution said these conspirators, numbering in all, including those on trial and those released and banished, about one hundred and fifty, were gathered at the Syon Chun, Ping Yang, Shung Tu, Kwak San and New Wiju railway stations, armed with pistols and knives.

Kim, The Insane.

One witness, named Kim, who has generally been regarded as insane, testified that he had bought twenty-five pistols at Mukden and had subsequently sold them at Antung. In all the so-called testimony this is the only tangible reference to pistols in any quantity.

This Kim deserves a letter to himself. It is sufficient here to state that his testimony reads like that of a man suffering from paranoia, who, after the assassination of Prince Ito, felt it was up to him to do something big. He talked about going to Europe to kill the "president of the Hague tribunal," but being without money and not relishing a tramp through Siberia and across Europe, he did nothing.

Kim's story was so rambling and as conflicting that even the Judge upbraided him for his manifest inconsistencies. As it stands, it is difficult to see how any court could accept this man's testimony as of any value whatever.

There is no testimony to corroborate his statement that he bought twenty-five pistols at Mukden or that he ever had twenty-five pistols. The other Koreans, despite the grave character of the charges against them, treated Kim as a joke. His testimony, in so far as it involved anybody but himself, was pronounced a lie. Although his role was that of star performer for the prosecution, he repudiated in court most of the statements he had made in the police examination and before the Procurator.

permitted to have a gun or a pistol. Of such flimsy stuff is this case, as presented to the Court, made. "Confessions," openly repudiated in court, with charges of birth under torture furnish the only plausible explanation for their existence. On no essential point is there any effort to present corroborative evidence.

There is no pretence that there was any attempt upon the life of the Governor General. There is no claim that there was untoward happening of any kind upon his visits at any of these places.

A thinner fabric than that presented by the prosecution could hardly be imagined. There is Crazy Kim, who repudiates himself at every turn, save in so far as his testimony involves himself, in insane desire to do something "big" and get his name before the world as an assassin of Prince Ito, did. His dream of going to Europe to kill the president of the Hague tribunal reveals the character and trend of his mind. Out of such a brain anything might come.

Then there are the "confessions." I imagine before the last is heard of this case the Japanese authorities concerned will be as ready to repudiate these "confessions" as the men who made them.

J. K. OHL.



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